

CURSE OF STRAHD

ATOP MOUNT GHAKIS



A Horror Adventure for Curse of Strahd

ATOP MOUNT GHAKIS

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INTRODUCTION

A strange connection to the early conquests of Count Strahd von Zarovich, the Order of the Silver Dragon, and the wild folk is hidden atop Mount Ghakis. At one of its icy peaks roosts a fearsome roc, known to carry away entire wagons as they attempt to cross the Luna River. This cold and unforgiving peak towers over Tsolenka Pass, marking the site of horrors committed long ago. The few surviving adventurers and wild folk who have dared to climb the peak report sightings of a horrific goat larger than a warhorse, blood dripping from its horns. Will the heroes reverse one of Strahd's acts of corruption, or will their bones join the pile that forms the roc's nest?

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

In Chapter 9, Tsolenka Pass, Curse of Strahd introduces an intriguing location, typically visited en route to the Amber Temple. Other than a few mundane monster encounters and perhaps a brief appearance from a roc and an intelligent goat, Tsolenka Pass and the ominous Mount Ghakis are never fleshed out. Strahd can teleport to one of the guard towers at Tsolenka Pass, but the campaign provides little reason why he would ever do such a thing.

What if the Roc of Mount Ghakis was dominated by Strahd to defeat the Order of the Silver Dragon and compelled to keep adventurers from reaching the Amber Temple? What if Sangzor is more than a mere intelligent goat, but actually an ancient druid mutilated by the devil Strahd? This adventure aims to turn these hypotheticals into a reality in your campaign with a thrilling new adventure for parties traveling along Tsolenka Pass.

As always, it is up to you how much of the content you want to use. It's perfectly fine to use some parts of this supplement while discarding others, or simply let the ideas presented here inspire new ideas of your own. This adventure is intended for parties of 4 to 6 characters with an average level of 7 to 9 and is intended to take place before or after the party visits the Amber Temple.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure starts as the party makes their way through Tsolenka Pass. As they cross the stone bridge over the Luna River, the Roc of Mount Ghakis swoops down, grabs a character, and flies off towards the peak of Mount Ghakis. The party must complete a series of skill checks as they climb the mountain. After some time, they have an encounter with a savage goat who is more than he seems. After a battle, the goat reveals itself to be a druid who goes by the name Sangzor. Sangzor explains that the Roc of Mount Ghakis is a slave to Strahd and asks the party to help free it. He escorts the party to one of the peaks of the mountain where they battle a gallows speaker ghost, who assaults the characters with haunted memories of the past. After the ghost is defeated, it lets out a wail calling the roc back to its nest. The party must battle the roc to escape with their lives by either freeing it from its evil bondage or killing it for good.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following adventure hooks can be used to entice the party to engage with this adventure.

IN THE CARDS (TREASURE) - CHAPTER 1

In Chapter 1, the book describes how Madam Eva gives the characters a card reading that describes to them the locations of several objects of power which can aid them in defeating Strahd. One such treasure lies on the rooftop of the Tsolenka Pass guard tower (in the book, this is the equivalent of drawing the 3 of Swords - Soldier tarot card, see pg. 12 for details). Instead, this treasure can reside in the Roc's nest atop Mount Ghakis near Tsolenka Pass. When this card is drawn, you can have Madam Eva instead say:

"Go to the mountains. Climb the peak guarded by horn and beak."

Alternatively, this reading works thematically well with the 4 of Glyphs - Shepherd or 5 of Glyphs - Druid.

IN THE CARDS (STRAHD'S ENEMY) - CHAPTER 1

In Chapter 1, the book describes how Madam Eva gives the characters a card reading that describes to them an enemy of Strahd. If they draw the Beast (Jack of Diamonds) or Broken One (King of Diamonds) (see pg. 15 for details), rather than Madam Eva name the Mad Mage or Donavich, you can have Madam Eva instead say:

"Your greatest ally is a druid who grieves for the lost. His spirit is broken but he is strong."

A HEAD OF A DRAGON - CHAPTER 7

In Chapter 7 (Argynvostholt) the skull of Argynvost must be returned in order for the Knights of the Silver Dragon to be at rest. The book states that the skull is held in area K67 of Castle Ravenloft (see Chapter 4). Instead, you can have Sir Godfrey Gwilym (located in area Q37. Knights of the Order in Argynvostholt) tell the party that Strahd killed Argynvost on the back of a monstrous winged bird (referred to as the Roc of Mount Ghakis). The bird carried off the head of Argynvost as a trophy and no one who has tried to retrieve it has ever returned.

THE NATURAL ORDER - CHAPTER 14

Chapter 14 (Yester Hill), describes an order of druids and berserkers that used to live in the Balinok Mountains. One of the special events on pg. 200 details the spirit of the long-dead barbarian chieftain, Kavan, who reveals to the party a magical weapon, a *blood spear* (see pg. 221). In this adventure, you can have Kavan be the brother of the druid Sangzor. When Kavan appears, you can read the following instead of the text on pg. 200:

You hear a whisper, a deep voice carried on the wind. "Long have I waited," it says, "for one who is worthy. My spear hungers for blood. Retrieve it from my grave upon this hill, and rule these mountains in my stead, just like the mighty warriors from the early days of the Whispering Wall."

"Our people have mostly departed from this world, but my brother Sangzor still lives. He would see the land healed from the twisted ways of the druids here. I can sense his presence atop Mount Ghakis, where he is tormented by his past." The wind seems to whisk the voice away as you faintly hear it say, "Find him."

BACKGROUND

In *Curse of Strahd*, there is a particularly nasty goat that lives near Tsolenka Pass named Sangzor. Other than being a stronger and more intelligent giant goat, Sangzor is a trivial encounter that is otherwise unconnected to the story. The Roc of Mount Ghakis is an interesting premise, but other than swooping in for a quick scare, it is also unconnected. These creatures are presented on pages 159 - 160 of *Curse of Strahd*.

In this adventure, Sangzor is not actually a goat, but instead a Circle of the Moon Druid who prefers to take the form of a monstrous goat. Sangzor roams Mount Ghakis, paranoid and alone, watching over the Roc of Mount Ghakis. He watches over the roc because in this adventure, the Roc of Mount Ghakis is no random beast - it was a tool Strahd used in the undoing of the Order of the Silver Dragon. The following is an expanded history involving these two characters.

Centuries before the arrival of Strahd, Kavan ruled over much of Barovia with the help of his brother Sangzor. Kavan commanded the respect of the barbarians and Sangzor the respect of the order of druids. Sangzor ("Bloodhorn") often fought in battle in the form of a giant goat, earning him his name. Generations of his tribe grew old and died, including his brother, while Sangzor's mastery of druidic magic allowed him to age more slowly. Disconnected from the new ways of his people, Sangzor wandered Barovia until he found Mount Ghakis and the roc who roosted on it, whose lifespan matched his own. Companions in solitude, a mutual respect developed between the two, and Sangzor settled on the mountain.

When Strahd came to Barovia, things began to change. Strahd subjugated the remaining druids of Sangzor's people, who put up little resistance when he taught them the power of the Gulthias Tree. Soon, Argynvost and the Order of the Silver Dragon were the only force that opposed him. In order to combat the dragon, Strahd turned his attention to the Roc of Mount Ghakis. Knowing he needed help to enslave the mighty creature, Strahd threatened Sangzor with the lives of the druids. Sangzor betrayed the roc to save what remained of the people he and his brother had once led, and helped Strahd create a magical collar that would bend the roc to Strahd's will.

With the roc on his side, Strahd slew Argynvost and used the roc to guard the Amber Temple against any who might discover the magic of the Dark Powers. Recognizing the power of the mighty druid, Strahd cut out Sangzor's tongue so that Sangzor would never be able to oppose him. Sangzor, filled with regret, retreated to Mount Ghakis to live out his days in the shadow of his old winged friend, chasing off any who would seek to do more harm to the beast. Over time, the isolation and guilt drove him to adopt his goat form almost exclusively, hating his human skin.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure takes place in two locations. First, the party travels through Tsolenka Pass and then makes their way up to one of the peaks of Mount Ghakis.

TSOLENKA PASS

The adventure begins at Tsolenka Pass (Chapter 9). As described on pg. 160, when the party crosses the T8. Stone Bridge, either coming to or from the Amber Temple, you can have the roc ambush them. The book suggests that the roc attacks a random creature or snatches a horse. Instead, you can have the roc snatch a beloved NPC that the party is traveling with and bring them up to its nest on Mount Ghakis. When the roc attacks, you can read or adapt the following:

Diving toward the bridge is a creature of unearthly size - a bird so monstrous that its wings blot out the sky. With deadly speed, it snatches [Insert name of NPC] off of the path in its massive claws and takes off toward the peak of Mount Ghakis. [Insert name of NPC]'s calls for help are muted by the wind as [he/she/they] appears no more than a doll in the giant bird's clutches.

The mist and snow make it difficult to see the roc's approach. When the roc strikes, you can have the party roll for initiative, but because the roc has a flying speed of 120 feet, the combat will likely be over in a single round. The roc uses both of its attacks to grapple the NPC near the bridge. Because the party is unlikely to thwart the snatch and run tactic, you can alternatively run this encounter as a cinematic moment rather than an actual combat. If the party is not traveling with NPCs, you can have the roc instead snatch a PC and have it retain their pack (and all of their items) if the PC manages to escape the grapple. If the PC is unable to escape the grapple before the roc gets 300 feet away, see the Troubleshooting section for a potential solution to keeping that player engaged in the session.

MOUNT GHAKIS

The roc's nest is located at one of the northern peaks of Mount Ghakis, approximately 2.5 miles (10 hexes) east of the stone bridge of Tsolenka Pass on Map 2.1 Barovia displayed on pg. 35 of *Curse of Strahd*.

CLIMBING MOUNT GHAKIS

When the party starts their trek up the mountain, you can read the following:

The craggy slopes of Mount Ghakis loom before you as you spot what could be a navigable natural path. The way is tough, but passable with some skill and luck.

The climb to the top of Mount Ghakis is treacherous. Characters must make one of the following checks at the end of each hour (you can either choose one or select one randomly). A single character from the group can make the check to represent the group's best attempt. The climb normally takes four hours, but can vary depending on the successes or failures.

1. Ledge. A character must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to traverse a treacherous ledge. On a success, the party's trek takes 30 fewer minutes. On a failure, the party member with the lowest Dexterity score falls 50 feet, taking 5d6 bludgeoning damage at the bottom.

2. Rock face. A character must succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to help the party scramble up a challenging rock face. On a success, the party's trek takes 30 fewer minutes. On a failure, the party member with the lowest Strength score suffers an injury that causes them to have disadvantage on all ability checks and attack rolls until the party takes a short or long rest, that character receives any amount of healing, or a character immediately succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check to address the injury.

3. Loose rocks. A character must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice some hazardous loose rocks. On a success, the character also spots an alternate route with rocks that block the wind. Taking this path allows the party to automatically succeed on the next Constitution saving throw to avoid exhaustion from the cold. On a failure, each party member must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

4. Morale. A character must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to motivate the party to press on through the gloom. On a success, the next party member to make a check can add a d8 to the roll. This die may be added after the die result is seen, but not after the DM announces if the check succeeds or fails. On a failure, the next party member to make a check does so with disadvantage.

5. Find the path. A character must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check to identify the safest path to the top. On a success, the next skill check made to climb the mountain can be made with advantage. On a failure, the party's trek takes an additional hour.

Druidic Carvings. As the party climbs the mountain, they encounter short poems and limericks carved perfectly into the stone written in a mixture of Common and Druidic language. Those who cannot read Druidic, can understand the meaning of the writing with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check. Sangzor has carved these over the years. At the end of each hour, roll 1d6 and consult the Mad Carvings Table to see what writing is found, re-rolling repeated results.

Druidic Carvings Table

d6	Carving
1	At the end of this path nests the queen of the sky, Who once flew free, in days gone by. Woe to the hunter who tests his hand For her sentinel is the lord of this land.
2	As tree did grow by misty wall, I could not thwart the Devil's call, I walk in shadow of my choice, And now I live without a voice.
3	By my horns and Kavan's spear, We ruled the land and had no fear. Since my dear brother's end, I've stood beside my only friend.
4	While Argynvost set out to fight, The Devil Strahd from here took flight. As dark wings filled men with dread, The silver dragon lost his head.
5	Only one whom I could trust, For others faded, turned to dust. Beware the land around her nest, 'Tis soaked in blood and Devil-blessed.
6	Betrayed betrayer of dearest friend My guilt and sorrow never end. I shackle-bound those in my care. Test my mercy, if you dare.

Extreme Cold, Increasing the Challenge

To increase the difficulty, you can have characters climbing Mount Ghakis suffer the effects of an extremely cold environment. A creature exposed to extreme cold must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or gain one level of exhaustion. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold damage automatically succeed on the saving throw, as do creatures wearing cold weather clothing.

BLOODHORN'S CHARGE

After three hours, the party passes into an area frequently patrolled by **Sangzor** (see Mountain Switchback Map). At this point, you can read the following:

The mountain path ahead appears to grow even more treacherous. The trail forms a narrow switchback as it ascends the steep slopes. Mist and snow greatly reduce visibility, and the howling wind cuts through like a knife. On the path at the base of a nasty ledge a frozen corpse lies on its back, well-preserved except for her crow-picked eyes.

The frozen corpse is the remains of a hunter who failed to heed Sangzor's warnings, and was knocked off the switchback above as a result. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals she died from falling and hitting the back of her head on the rocks, while a successful Wisdom (Medicine) check of 15 or greater also reveals a broken sternum and several cracked ribs, the result of a sudden impact to the chest.

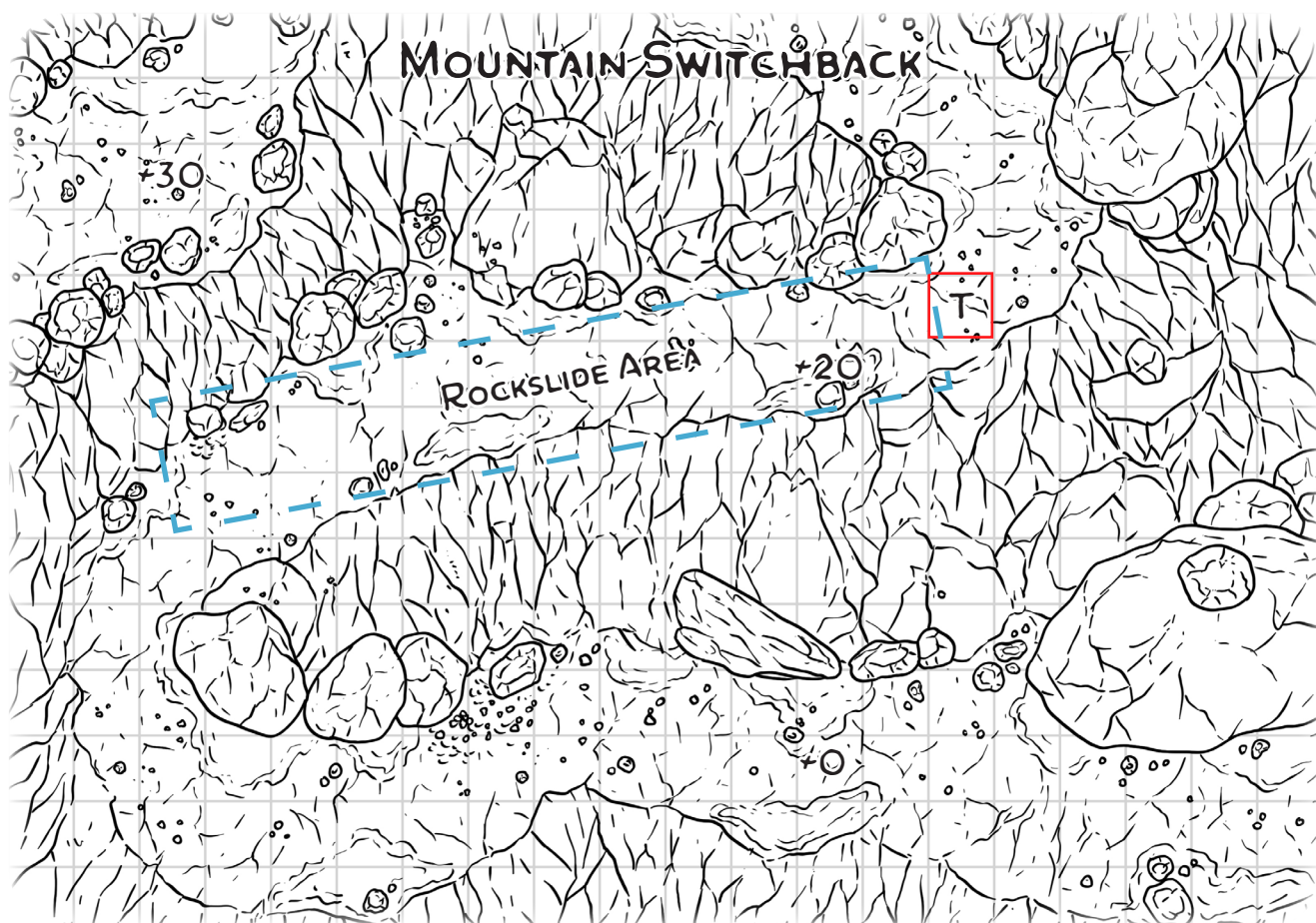
Trap. Sangzor has set a trap with a *snare* spell in this narrow passage at the location marked with 'T' on the map. The trap is nearly invisible and undetectable without a *detect magic* spell beneath the light snow. Whichever character is in front in the party marching order must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained by the spell. That character can make DC 17 Dexterity saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. Alternatively the character or someone else who can reach them can use an action to make an Intelligence (Arcana) check (DC 17). On a success, the restrained effect ends.

Rockslide. The moment the trap triggers, Sangzor creates a small rockslide using a thunderclap spell. When this happens, you can read the following:

A nine-foot-tall goat stands atop a crag above you, its purplish-gray fur blending perfectly with the rock of the mountainside. Dried blood clings to its horns like rust. It lowers its head, and malice glimmers in its eyes. With a sudden thud of its hooves, a crack of thunder emanates out, sending ice and rock cascading down towards you.

When the rockslide occurs, all nearby creatures should roll initiative. On initiative count 10 the rockslide crashes into the 60-foot wide area marked on the map with an 'Rockslide Area'. Creatures hit by the rockslide must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw, taking 1d10 bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. Creatures that fail the saving throw are also buried in 1d4+1 feet of rubble. A creature that has more than half of its height buried is restrained. If its full height is buried, it is also blinded and has total cover. A buried creature (or a nearby creature pulling them out) can use an action to make a Strength (Athletics) check with the DC equal to 10 + the number of feet buried in order to escape.

Battlefield. The area marked 'Rockslide Area' is difficult terrain following the rockslide. The slopes between switchback paths have many handholds and can be climbed without an ability check. Characters that fall from the edge of the upper path fall 20 feet to the path below. Spells and other effects that create loud noises or deal thunder damage have a 50% chance to trigger a small rockslide. When this occurs, all creatures within a 15-foot radius of the spell's origin must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be buried under 1d4+1 feet of rubble (see above for conditions and escape criteria).



Sangzor's tactics. Sangzor starts the combat in **monstrous goat** form having expended one of his uses of Goat Shape. He slides down the slope and first targets creatures that avoided the rockslide, attempting to knock them over the ledge using his Charge feature. If there are no suitable targets for this tactic, Sangzor will attack restrained or prone creatures with a *primal savagery* spell or multiple creatures using a *thunderclap* spell. He will also target close groups of creatures with an *ice knife* spell (potentially using a higher level spell slot). Once Sangzor's goat form has been reduced to 0 hit points and he reverts to his true form, he uses Goat Shape again to continue the fight. The first time Sangzor's human form is revealed, you can read the following:

The vicious goat form fades away revealing a ragged and lean human male. Between his unkempt grey hair and beard, his face is lined with a few shallow wrinkles and his emerald eyes are nearly hidden beneath a perpetually furrowed brow. He wears fraying armor made from the hides of wolves.

Surrender. Once reverted to his true form for a second time or at any point if Kavan's *blood spear* is wielded against him, Sangzor surrenders. He recognizes the power that the party wields may be the key to freeing the roc from the grasp of Strahd. Because he cannot speak due to Strahd's mutilation, he raises his hands and uses a *mold earth* spell to communicate his surrender. To convey his intent to recruit them to free the roc, he forms images of the bird, Strahd, and a collar of brambles on the stone. He can also spell out full sentences in the rock (see Roleplaying Sangzor sidebar). If the party forms an alliance with Sangzor, he leads them to a safe place to take a short rest before escorting them up the mountain to the roc's nest (otherwise they must continue up the mountain without him). During this time he may take the time to explain important parts of the inevitable confrontation with the roc.

Treasure. Sangzor always carries two *potions of healing* brewed from local mountain herbs, which he can give or administer to the characters if they aid him in freeing the roc. If the party takes a short rest, Sangzor crafts a *spell scroll of earthbind* from a piece of thin bark for the party to use in their confrontation with the roc. Though he can craft the scroll, he cannot cast the spell himself.

Explaining removing the collar. Sangzor will explain to the party how they might save the roc. To demonstrate how to remove the collar from the roc, Sangzor produces a small length of vine-like rose stem from his herb pouch and tries to get one of the party to volunteer, pointing at the characters and back at the stem while nodding. He wraps it around the arm of a volunteer, or himself, so that several barbs sink into their flesh. He'll show that tugging at the vine with brute force merely opens the wounds more without dislodging the barbs, but a delicate and deliberate pulling of the vine along the surface of the skin results in the removal of the thorns (see Battling the Roc for mechanical details).

Explaining handling the roc. Sangzor will instruct the party in how to manage the roc's perception of their potential as prey. For this, he will use mold earth to show an image of the roc facing away from him. First, he writes "Prey runs", stomps his feet, widens his eyes, and will flee from it while having the roc image pursue him. He will then add "Forward or back", and feigns a charge at the roc image, which will charge to meet him. Finally, he will stare at the image calmly, raise his hands, stretch out

his cloak, and not move towards or away from the image. He will then have the image of the roc face away from him, and write "While calm resolve takes her aback" (see 'Battling the Roc' for mechanical details).

Roleplaying Sangzor

Sangzor has aged slowly due to his druidic ways, but time has not been kind to him in his isolation. The only people he truly trusts are centuries dead, and he hasn't hosted guests in his crag since the roc was turned. He has little need for communication, having grown accustomed to the noise of the wind while he spends his days patrolling the mountain for threats, gathering food and herbs, and gazing on the roc from afar. As such, he will answer any questions simply and succinctly, without any embellishment, using hand gestures or cantrips to scrawl text in rock or form shapes. However, he will not bring up information of his own accord unless he deems it necessary for achieving his goal of freeing the roc. He has seen many adventurers meet their fate trying to free this land, and harbors doubts that the characters can withstand Strahd's might, though he is waiting to see how they handle the roc before passing too much judgment on them. During the encounter with the roc, he will focus on using his knowledge of the collar to free the roc, declining to directly harm her. He freely shares information that he believes will lead to an outcome where the roc is spared, but refrains from outright lying.

Sangzor's Traits

Ideal. "Strahd turned me into a monster and destroyed all I had left."

Bond. "I must save the roc to make things right."

Flaw. "People are not to be trusted."

MASS GRAVE

After the party encounters Sangzor, they must travel one more hour to the peak where the roc nests. If the party is traveling with Sangzor as an ally, they automatically succeed on their check to climb the mountain. If a character was previously taken by the roc in the earlier part of this adventure, that character is unconscious with 0 hit points (although stable) in the middle of the nest. When the party reaches the peak, you can read the following:

The wind and haze abate briefly, allowing a glimpse of the mountaintop. A massive nest made of wagon debris sits on a stone perch in the distance. Immediately before you, bones and pieces of caravans are piled in a mound six feet high and thirty feet wide.

When the characters approach the roc's nest, they encounter ghostly creatures who loom over a mass grave of the roc's victims. These undead are dormant within the bone pile until a living creature approaches within 30 feet of the nest. When the party approaches, you can read the following:

A spectral humanoid figure rises from the nest of bones. It glares at you with cold hatred and mutters in an icy whisper, "You will suffer as we did."

The spectral humanoid is a **gallows speaker**. In addition, there is one **specter** plus one additional specter for level 8 parties, or two for level 9 parties. These undead rise from the bone pile to attack the party and fight until destroyed. You can use the Roc's Nest Map for this encounter.

Echoes of the past. The creatures attack the party immediately and cannot be reasoned with. It starts the battle by using its suffering echoes action. When this happens, you can read the following to the target as they experience a vision of the past:

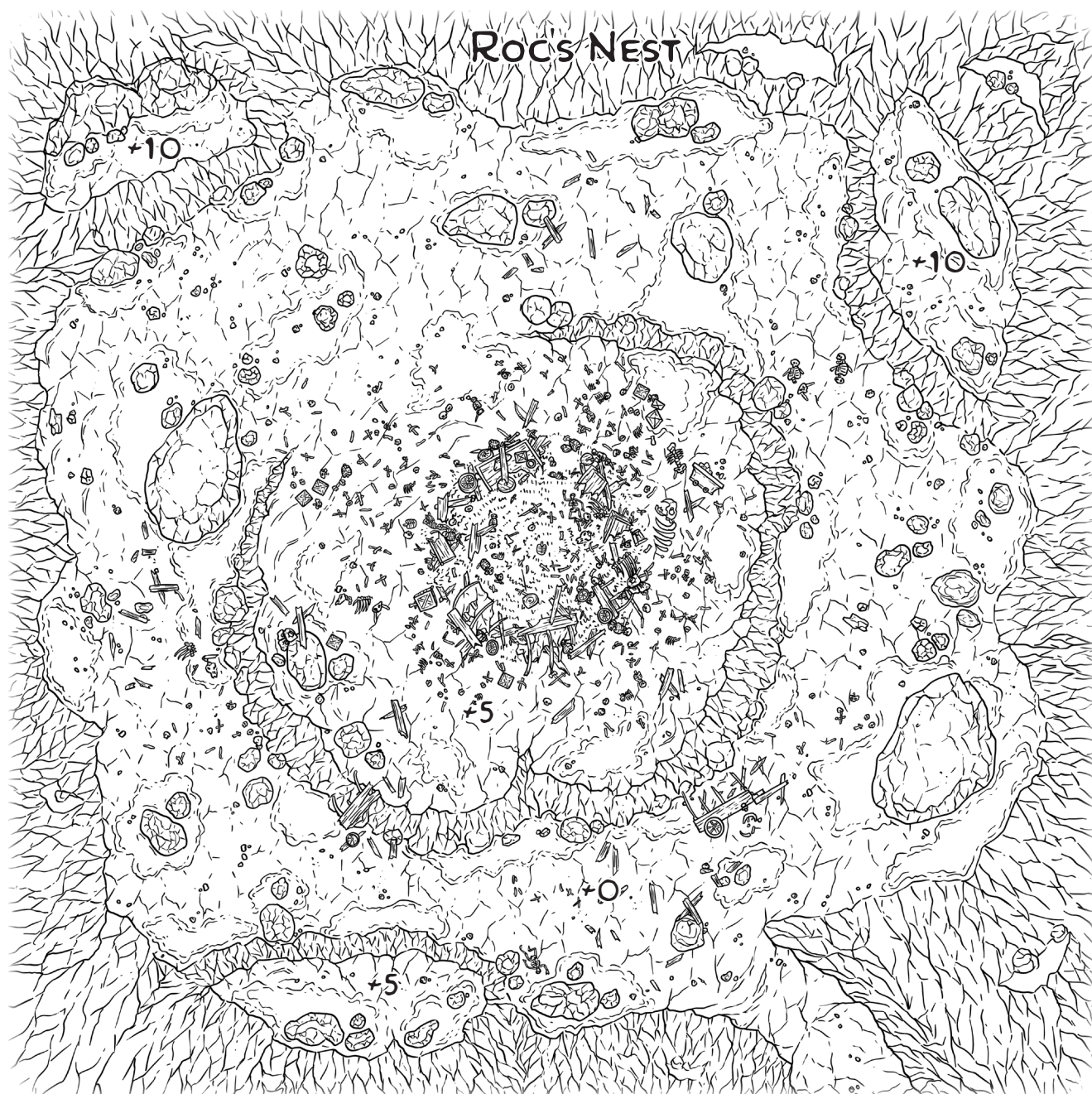
The scene around you shifts as you see the devil Strahd standing grinning behind a younger-looking Sangzor. A gigantic bird stands before the druid as he reaches out his hand. Thorny hooked vines covered in necrotic energy ensnare its neck. The bird begins to shriek as barbs penetrate its flesh and appear to swell, forming a collar over the wound. The roc falls quiet as its eyes begin to glow green. As Sangzor steps back, Strahd raises his hand as the roc bows before him. “You’ve done well, Bloodhorn.”

The second time the gallows speaker uses its suffering echoes action or when it is defeated, you can read the following vision:

The scene around you shifts as you see Strahd mounted atop the massive roc. Soldiers clad in silver armor fall before his undead horde as the roc swoops down, dropping men and women from terrible heights. A silver dragon takes flight to defend his army as Strahd licks his fanged teeth and says, “Argynvost, your time has come.”

Once the gallows speaker is defeated (and after the party experiences the second vision), you can read the following.

The ghostly figure lets out a terrible wail that echoes from the peak of the mountain and all is silent. Suddenly, in the distance, a response to the wail comes in the form of the screech of a bird.



BATTLING THE ROC

The **roc** is a formidable foe for even 9th level parties. You can use the Roc's Nest Battlemap for this combat encounter. If Sangzor is with the party, he surmises that they have about a minute to prepare themselves before the roc arrives after the gallows speaker lets out its final wail. Without Sangzor, the party can determine this with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check based on the distance of the sound. Sangzor motions to the party to focus on removing the collar. When the roc arrives, you can read the following:

Another screech, this time much louder, erupts from seemingly all directions, reverberating off the mountainside. Barovia's weak light fades even weaker as a wide and faint shadow covers the nest and the grave. High above a dark shape is visible emerging from the clouds. The roc has arrived.

Removing the collar. Characters within 5 feet of the roc can use an action to attempt to dislodge the hooked thorns of the collar by making a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check. After five successful checks, the collar is broken. A *dispel magic* spell counts as two automatic successes. Sangzor uses his action on each of his turns to attempt to remove the collar. The roc generally ignores Sangzor, focusing on other targets.

Handling the roc. Through miming, Sangzor demonstrates to the characters how they can direct the roc's aggression towards them by panicking or away from themselves by calmly and standing their ground and appearing threatening, either of which can be attempted using an action to make a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. On a failure, the roc does the opposite of what the character intended (or if the DM thinks appropriate does something else entirely). Sangzor will focus on removing the collar rather than attacking the roc.

Roc tactics. On the first round of combat, the roc lands and attacks the party in melee, hoping for an easy meal. After taking 50 points of damage, the roc changes tactics, using its talons attack to grab a character and fly its full movement upwards to drop them. She continues to use this divebomb tactic until a character falls unconscious and then resumes her ground assault. Due to its manipulation by Strahd, the roc does not have the self preservation senses to flee.

Lair Actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the roc takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the roc can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The roc whips her wings to create a vortex, stirring up the bones and latent necromantic energy in the nest. 1d4+1 **skeletons** animate, each acting on initiative count 10. On initiative count 20 of the following round, the wind dies down and the skeletons are reduced to inanimate bones.
- Skeletal corpses briefly animate in a 20-foot-radius centered on a point the roc can see within 120 feet of it. Skeletal arms attempt to grab the legs of creatures within the affected area. Each creature must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or become grappled. (escape DC 11). A skeletal hand grappling a creature may be treated as a **crawling claw**, which ceases to animate after a creature avoids or escapes its grasp.
- A strong gust of wind blows over the entire battlefield in a direction of the roc's choice. Each creature in a 120

foot radius sphere centered on a point the roc can see within 120 feet of it, must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or take 1d6 bludgeoning damage from flying debris and be pushed 15 feet in the direction of the wind. Any creature moving against the direction of the wind must spend 2 feet of movement for every 1 foot it moves. Creatures that use wings to fly in the direction of the wind may move 2 feet for every 1 foot of movement it spends. The gust disperses gas or vapor, and it extinguishes candles, torches, and similar unprotected flames in the area and lasts for one round.

Collar is removed. If the party successfully removes the collar from the roc's neck, you can read the following:

With a whine like steam escaping a burning log, the briars around the roc's neck begin to shrivel, their thorns withdrawing from its flesh as the foul green glow in the roc's eyes fades. It tears off the remnants of Strahd's collar and takes flight, releasing a call of joy for the first time in centuries. With great swiftness, it tears a hole in the clouds and a glimmer of impossibly bright light is visible for an instant. The roc is free.

Roc is slain. If the party kills the roc, you can read the following:

As the foul glow of the roc's eyes fades, it continues to twitch and thrash as if driven by some supernatural force. It wails in anguish while the strange briar collar on its neck appears to swell. Portions of the collar begin to burst, releasing a spray of crimson blood that stains the snow on this cursed ground. As the roc's death throes finally cease, the ruptured collar falls to the ground, spilling blood and melting the snow around it. The constant rushing of the alpine winds falls to a sigh, followed by a strangely palpable silence. The roc is dead, its majesty no more.

Treasure. The roc has collected a number of treasures over the years. Within the nest, the party can find the following:

- An half-destroyed alchemist's cart belonging to a mist traveler killed on their way to deliver supplies to Lamordia (another Domain of Dread). The intact boxes display markings that read 'PROPERTY OF DR. MORDENHEIM'. Still salvageable inside these boxes are a *potion of frost giant strength* and several human head-sized jars of a strange green preservative fluid which imparts the benefits of a *gentle repose* spell on anything that remains immersed within it.
- The corpse of a monster hunter who still clutches his *lantern of tracking (undead)*. His hand crossbow was destroyed when he was killed by the roc, but 1d10 silvered bolts remain in the nest.
- A silvered longsword etched with the likeness of a silver dragon worth 250 gp.
- A hoard of 600 cp, 8,000 sp, 2,300 gp, 90 pp, a silver necklace with a gemstone pendant worth 250 gp, a cracked small mirror set into a painted wooden frame, and a *driftglobe*.

Fortunes of Ravenloft. If your card reading reveals that a treasure is here, it is lying amongst the wreckage of the roc's nest.

CONCLUSION

If the party saves the roc from the thorned collar, Sangzor thanks them for righting an ancient wrong. He offers to fly the party to any destination they wish within Barovia and any of the roc's treasures. While flying on the roc, the party encounters no resistance from Strahd or the monsters of Barovia. Beyond this, Sangzor will decline to accompany the party on their future quests, preferring to remain with the roc on the mountain. If your card reading reveals that Sangzor is Strahd's enemy and the characters release the roc from Strahd's control, he offers to join the fight against the vampire.

If Sangzor survives but the roc is killed, he will resent the party for failing to redeem his friend, but accepts that the roc is at peace. In this scenario, he leaves them at the conclusion of the fight and wanders Barovia as a goat until the end of his days, never setting foot on Mount Ghakis again.

TROUBLESHOOTING

PC captured. If a PC gets captured by the roc, you can take that player aside and allow them to take the role of Sangzor in the adventure. Explain to that player their role and motivations in the adventure and provide them with Sangzor's stat block.

Sangzor slain. If the party kills Sangzor, the adventure can still continue. The party will have a much more challenging road ahead of them without his guidance and will need to slay the roc or retreat if they get overpowered. Based on the visions from the gallows speaker, clever players may still be able to piece together the role of the collar and win the day without additional bloodshed. You can modify the visions from the gallows speaker to present additional information at your discretion. Alternatively, you can have the party come across Sangzor's shelter where he keeps a journal explaining his history.

Looks like a TPK. If the party tries to save the roc but a total party kill looks imminent, you can have Sangzor draw the roc's attention and give a signal for the party to flee. At your discretion Sangzor may live or die (or die and rise again as an undead).

MAGIC ITEMS

DRIFTGLOBE

Wondrous item, uncommon

This small sphere of thick glass weighs 1 pound. If you are within 60 feet of it, you can speak its command word and cause it to emanate the light or daylight spell. Once used, the daylight effect can't be used again until the next dawn.

You can speak another command word as an action to make the illuminated globe rise into the air and float no more than 5 feet off the ground. The globe hovers in this way until you or another creature grasps it. If you move more than 60 feet from the hovering globe, it follows you until it is within 60 feet of you. It takes the shortest route to do so. If prevented from moving, the globe sinks gently to the ground and becomes inactive, and its light winks out.

LANTERN OF TRACKING (UNDEAD)

Wondrous item, common

This hooded lantern burns for 6 hours on 1 pint of oil, shedding bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light for an additional 30 feet.

This lantern of tracking is designed to track down undead creatures. While the lantern is within 300 feet of any undead creatures, its flame turns bright green. The lantern doesn't pinpoint the creature's exact location, however.

POTION OF FROST GIANT STRENGTH

Potion, rare

When you drink this potion, your Strength score changes to 23 for 1 hour. The potion has no effect on you if your Strength is equal to or greater than that score.

This potion's transparent liquid has floating in it a sliver of fingernail from a frost giant.

POTION OF HEALING

Potion, common

A character who drinks the magical red fluid in this vial regains 2d4 + 2 hit points. Drinking or administering a potion takes an action. The potion's red liquid glimmers when agitated.

SPELL SCROLL (EARTHBIND)

Scroll, uncommon

A spell scroll bears the words of a single spell (*earthbind*), written in a mystical cipher. If the spell is on your class's spell list, you can read the scroll and cast its spell without providing any material components. Otherwise, the scroll is unintelligible. Casting the spell by reading the scroll requires an action. The save DC for the spell is 13. Once the spell is cast, the words on the scroll fade, and it crumbles to dust. If the casting is interrupted, the scroll is not lost.

If the spell is on your class's spell list but of a higher level than you can normally cast, you must make an ability check using your spellcasting ability to determine whether you cast it successfully. The DC equals 12. On a failed check, the spell disappears from the scroll with no other effect.

CREATURES

SANGZOR (DRUID)

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armor Class 16 (hide armor, shield)

Hit Points 132 (24d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +9

Skills Medicine +9, Nature, +5, Perception +9

Senses passive Perception 19

Languages understands Common, Druidic, and Draconic but cannot speak

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Spellcasting. Sangzor is an 18th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *primal savagery*, *mold earth*, *shape water*, *thunderclap*

1st level (4 slots): *absorb elements*, *ice knife*, *snare*

2nd level (3 slots): *beast sense*

3rd, 4th, 5th level (3 slots each): —

6th, 7th, 8th, 9th level (1 slot each): —

Mutilation. Sangzor's tongue has been cut out and he cannot cast any spells with a verbal component.

ACTIONS

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Goat Shape (2/Day). As a bonus action, Sangzor magically polymorphs into monstrous goat, and can remain in this form for up to 9 hours. He can choose whether its equipment falls to the ground, melds with its new form, or is worn by the new form. He reverts to his true form if he is knocked unconscious or dies, or if his goat form falls to 0 hit points. Sangzor can revert to his true form using a bonus action.

While in a goat form, Sangzor retains his game statistics, but his AC, movement modes, Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution are replaced by those of the goat form, and he gains any special senses, proficiencies, traits, actions, and reactions (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) that the goat form has but that his true form lacks. He can cast spells with somatic components in goat form.

The new form's attacks count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistances and immunity to nonmagical attacks.

SANGZOR (MONSTROUS GOAT)

Large beast

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +9

Skills Medicine +9, Nature, +5, Perception +9

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses passive Perception 19

Languages understands Common, Druidic, and Draconic but cannot speak

Challenge -- (Proficiency Bonus +4)

Spellcasting. Sangzor is an 18th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *primal savagery*, *mold earth*, *shape water*, *thunderclap*

1st level (4 slots): *absorb elements*, *ice knife*, *snare*

2nd level (3 slots): *beast sense*

3rd, 4th, 5th level (3 slots each): —

6th, 7th, 8th, 9th level (1 slot each): —

Mutilation. Sangzor's tongue has been cut out and he cannot cast any spells with a verbal component.

Charge. If Sangzor moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone or be pushed 10 feet away from Sangzor.

Sure-Footed. The goat has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

ACTIONS

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Primal Savagery. *Melee Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. *Hit:* 21 (4d10) acid damage.

CRAWLING CLAW

Tiny undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 2 (1d4)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages --

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Turn Immunity. The claw is immune to effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning or slashing damage (claw's choice).

GALLOWS SPEAKER

Medium undead

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 85 (19d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +4

Skills Perception +7

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages any languages its component spirits knew in life

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Divination Senses. The gallows speaker can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The gallows speaker can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Unusual Nature. The gallows speaker doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

ACTIONS

Foretelling Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) psychic damage, and the target must roll a d4 and subtract the number rolled from the next attack roll or saving throw it makes before the start of the gallows speaker's next turn.

Suffering Echoes. The gallows speaker targets a creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 19 (3d12) psychic damage, and waves of painful memories leap from the target to up to three other creatures of the gallows speaker's choice that are within 30 feet of the target, each of which takes 13 (3d8) psychic damage.

SKELETON

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (armor scraps)

Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Roc

Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 248 (16d20 + 80)

Speed 20 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +9, Wis +4, Cha +3

Skills Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages --

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Keen Sight. The roc has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The roc makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 27 (4d8 + 9) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 23 (4d6 + 9) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 19). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the roc can't use its talons on another target.

SPECTER

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The specter can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the specter has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Life Drain. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

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ADVENTURE

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